

THE COMMUNICATOR

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Issue 7 Spring 2010

Unique Forum Sheds Light on LGBT Issues

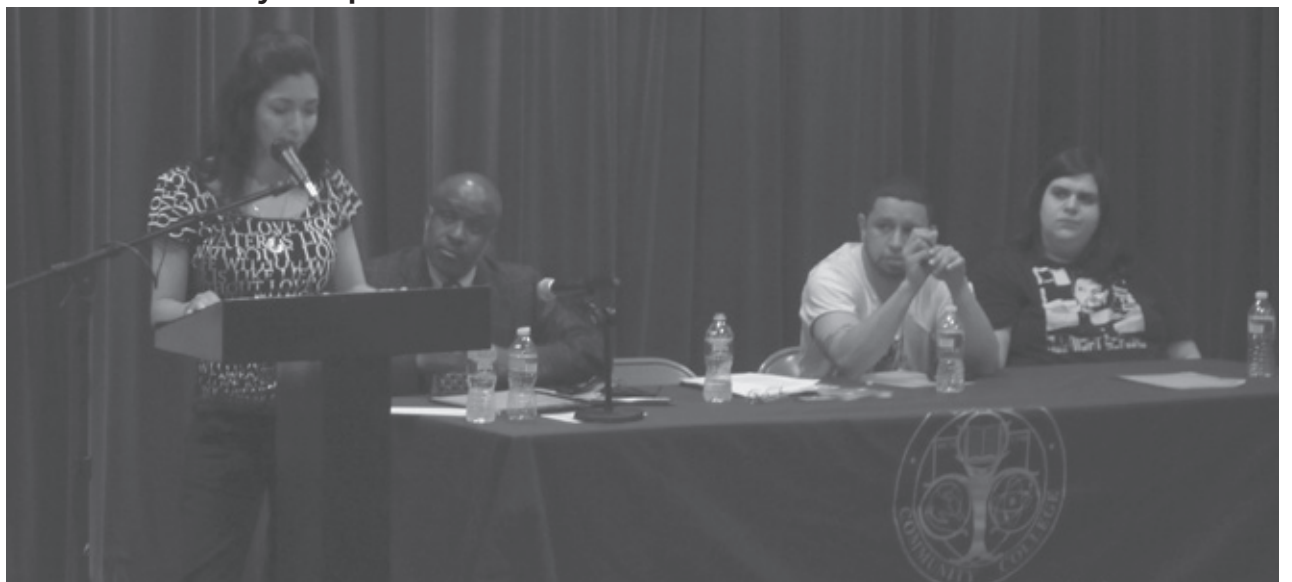
by Joseph White

On Tuesday, May 4, 2010, the Center for Tolerance and Understanding, the Rainbow Alliance Club, the Urban Unity Club and the Office of Student Life partnered for a special panel – *Fostering Support for BCC's LGBT Community* – that addressed some of the issues facing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students on campus. The program was the first of its kind in many years but it was an important first step in acknowledging the growing number of LGBT students on campus. Of special note is the fact that much of the planning and organizational work for this forum was student driven.

The panel, moderated by Laconia Therrio, featured Student Development faculty member, Prof. Marilyn Russell, Victor Rajcoomar from the Center for Sustainable Energy, and students Sharon Chin and William Murray from the Rainbow Alliance and Urban Unity clubs. The panelists all evoked instances at the College where lesbian and gay students have felt shut out of the mainstream of college life. Rajcoomar added, however, that one positive path to acceptance is for students to become engaged in the fabric of campus life and to not isolate themselves in LGBT matters only. Russell added that the College has in the past offered counsel to LGBT students but that the support has not been sustained over time. She hoped that this forum would be the first in many other initiatives that will bring visibility to issues in BCC's LGBT community and that it would also bring other voices into the discussion. Both Murry and Chin noted that the two new clubs – the Rainbow Alliance and Urban Unity – have brought together both gay and straight students.

The program also featured LGBT activists and spoken-word artists, La Bruja, Simply Rob and Katina Douveas. They brought a personal perspective and performance flair that electrified the audience.

The discussion was rich and allowed for audience



Spokenword artist La Bruja performs while moderator Laconia Therrio and panelists Simply Rob and Katina Douveas look on.
Photo by Andrew Rowan

members, from faculty to staff to students, to consider the many circumstances that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people face on a daily basis – from coming out of the closet to living and adjusting in a homo/bi/trans-phobic and heterosexist society. One student noted, in a bittersweet reflection, that she was excited to see this kind of public discussion around LGBT issues but sad that she is graduating this spring and will not be on campus to more fully engage in further activities.

When the panel ended, audience members had an opportunity to speak directly with panelists during a post-program reception. There was a lot of energy in the room as well as engaging discussions about next steps for similar programs on campus. One BCC student, who is a father of

a gay child, stressed that all places and spaces on campus should be safe zones, and that it is the responsibility of the entire College community to ensure that a climate of respect exists universally.

Additional programs and forums are being planned for 2010-2011, and suggestions from the College community are welcomed. Fostering support for BCC's LGBT community is now on the map, especially with the formation of the Rainbow Alliance and Urban Unity clubs. For more information on how to get involved with the Center for Tolerance and Understanding, the Office of Student Life or clubs on campus, contact Student Life in Meister Hall, room 202, or become a fan of our Facebook page at: <http://www.facebook.com/BCCStudentLife>.

BCC Students Explain Math and Science Theories in Meister Hall Poster Exhibit

Bronx Community College (BCC) mathematics, computer science, chemistry, biology and social science students proudly showed off their research, conducted under the guidance of professor-mentors, at the College's annual Math and Science Fair. Held in Meister Hall, their exhibits were supported by poster displays of graphs, text, photos, drawings and charts.

"The fair is the celebration of undergraduate research. And research is the ultimate learning tool, the true embodiment of active learning," states Dr. Maria Psarelli, professor of math and faculty coordinator of the Alliance for Minority Participation in Science, Engineering and Mathematics.

The student research exhibits included "Side Effects of Aspartame, an Artificial Sweetener," "Environmental Justice Issues in the Bronx," "Cramer's Rule in Boolean Algebra" and more. The fair gave the BCC student-researchers experience in interpreting their projects as they answered questions from observers. The posters gave fellow students an opportunity to get a closer look at the world of science.

BCC student Jeffrey Guard worked on a project with Francisca Villar, a BCC 2009 graduate. Their project is "Phytotolerance to Toxic Heavy Metals by American and International Rice Oryza sativa Cultivars L. in vitro." It studies the use of rice (oryza sativa) cultivars to remove toxic heavy metals from contaminated bodies of water and plots of land. "The benefit of this technology is that phytoremediation can potentially be an effective tool in removing contaminated waste from water and soil sources," says Guard. "The implications of this technology are significant in that they provide a powerful tool to anyone who knows how to effectively plant rice, which is relatively inexpensive compared to other methods for cleaning contaminated ecosystems."

Ms. Villar, who is a single mother with two children, is a busy person. She worked on the phytoremediation research project and also campaigned in the citywide 2009 mayoral election (receiving 5,300 votes). Now, she is a student at Lehman College studying anthropology, biology and chemistry and running for Lehman College Student Government vice president.

Guard is the recipient of a \$2,500 Michael Steuerman Award. He plans to transfer to Lehman College

to study biology. Eventually, he plans to become a doctor. He contends that it is vital that people understand the power behind the science, and that effective communication is key. Posters can break down the process and help people understand enough to appreciate the importance of what is being presented.

"This kind of project is important because it helps motivate students by providing opportunities for research," says Biology Professor Charles Maliti, who mentors Guard and Villar. The professor believes that by working with a mentor, students can develop scientific skills that can be transferred to other scientific disciplines such as physics and psychology.

"Among the students who participate in this fair, some are the College's best. I am confident that they will also be the best elsewhere, in senior colleges and in their professions," says Psarelli. "Hopefully, some of them will successfully pursue their own research in graduate school."

Student and mentor research projects included the following:

"Icosahedron": Student Adelita Lassu (Digital Arts) and mentor Dr. Anthony Weaver (Math & Computer Science).

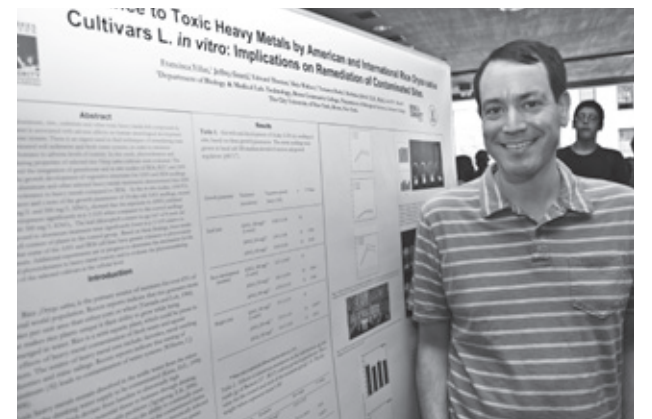
Cramer's Rule in Boolean Algebra": Students Isirikoufoulou Sibabi Akpo and Moutawakilou Ibrahim (Engineering Science) and mentor Dr. Alexander Kheyfits (Math & Computer Science).

"Dynamics of the Sums of Cubes": Student Xavier Aglamey (Computer Science) and mentor Dr. Rony Gouraige (Math & Computer Science).

"Cobamax—An Enhanced Uptake Form of Vitamin B12": Student Md Nuruzzaman (Nursing) and mentor Dr. Thomas Brennan (Chemistry).

"Environmental Justice Issues in the Bronx": Student Jeffrey Cruz (Nursing) and mentor Dr. Farnosh Saeedi (Chemistry).

"Side Effects of Aspartame, an Artificial Sweetener": Student Indira Codero (Nursing) and mentor



Jeffrey Guard stands in front of his phytoremediation poster at BCC's science fair.

Dr. Thomas Brennan (Chemistry).

"Toxic Pollutants on the Ecosystem": Student McCartney Y. Defran (Nursing) and mentor Dr. Farnosh Saeedi (Chemistry).

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The Communicator Editorial Policy and Disclaimer

The Communicator urges students to submit articles and editorials to the newspaper. We also encourage students to respond to the articles and editorials found in this newspaper.

The views expressed in by-lined articles and in published letters are solely those of the writer, and they do not necessarily represent the view of *The Communicator*.

We reserve the right to edit any article or letter submitted due to space considerations.

We reserve the right to refuse publication to any article or letter due to space considerations as well as those articles or letters deemed inappropriate because of profane language, non-verification problems, or slander.

No article or letter will be published unless the author submits his or her name, email address, and telephone number.

Please submit all articles and letters to the following email address:
rowanandrewdavid@aol.com.

Notes:

No Word submissions will be accepted that are saved in Word 2007. Please save and submit in an earlier version.

JPEGs must be submitted as email attachments and should not be embedded in the Word copy.

The Communicator

Please note that *The Communicator* reserves the right to refuse publication of any submission due to space considerations or if the submission is deemed inappropriate because of profane language, verification problems, and/or slander.

Communicator Staff

Editor-in-Chief
Massawa Lawson

Managing Editor
Mouzaffirou Afoda

IOC Representative
Beatriz Ramirez

Staff Writers
Raya Bayor
Muhammad Jalloh
Astharte De Los Santos
Carmela Perez



(From left to right)
Carmela Perez, Astharte De Los Santos, Massawa Lawson, Andrew Rowan, Beatriz Ramirez, and Muhammad Jalloh.
Not pictured: Raya Bayor
Photo by Charles Sabat

BCC Secondhand Smoke Program Fulfills Commitment to Smoking Community

From the Co-sponsors of the Program

Department of Health, Physical Education, and Wellness

Office of Health Services

Professional Staff Congress— BCC Chapter

Student Government Association

Per the request of the College Smoking Community, two outdoor smoking areas with protective overhanging structures have been designated with appropriate signage as follows:

1. Upper south side plaza of Meister Hall with ashtray, tables, and benches.
2. West side of Meister Hall with ashtray, table, and benches.

Both areas are centrally located within the campus and provide adequate protection from the upcoming challenging winter months. The areas also provide an environment that can accommodate numerous smokers.

Please remember that the *Friendly Reminder Approach* is implemented for the purpose of creating a program of fairness for both the non-smoking and smoking community members of the college. The program is working because of the support of the BCC Administration and the compliance of the majority of the smoking community.

Once again, thank you for your continued help in making this program a success!

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WEDNESDAY
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3 CREDITS

Campus News

Winners Win

By Carmela Perez

Erwin Fernandez, a student at Bronx Community College, who is a member of the Speech, Drama and Debate Team, won third place in The City University of New York's annual speech competition held at the New York City College of Technology, on Saturday April 24th.

Fernandez, majoring in history, prepared a persuasive speech which he presented at the meeting of the CUNY League of Active Speech Professors (CLASP). His speech, "Legalizing Hemp in New York State," focused on the legalization of hemp, which he argued is a useful plant in the state of New York. "I'm trying to persuade people to support the passing of bills A.9016 and S.4041-B which would legalize hemp in New York State."

He says he felt well informed on his topic and that he "was eager to speak about it and let people know what hemp is all about." He felt some of the good qualities of his speech were his sources and structure. "I was informing you on a topic that is beneficiary for the whole world," Fernandez states.

As a member of the Speech, Drama and Debate Team, Fernandez expresses that he is utilizing this experience to prepare for his future career goals. "The thing is, I want to be a teacher and eventually a lawyer and I need to get the jitters out now. I need to get started on

this now," he adds. "Also I need to develop my speaking techniques. It was also a personal interest; I thought it would be pretty interesting. Fun."

Members of the team supported Fernandez and were proud that he achieved third place in his first competition. Christopher Forbes, a member of the team and friend of Fernandez says, "Erwin is a charismatic speaker, who puts time and energy into his speech writing. It is this dedication that will allow Erwin to do great on the team," he adds. "Erwin's speech on hemp and its practical applications demonstrated that the art of persuasion can be very effective if you place value in your topic and on the position you support."

The team finished with a bang. Now they are preparing for the following semester in which Coach Ellen Mareneck along with her team, seek to go to Nationals by the end of next year. She encourages students to join the Speech, Drama and Debate Team. Not only would it serve as an excellent opportunity to improve student's communication skills, but it would also allow them to take part in events which will benefit their future.

If anyone is interest in joining, feel free to email Professor Mareneck at ellen.mareneck@bcc.cuny.edu or drop by her office at Colston 735 during her office hours.



BCC Media Technology and Film Society Presents Actor and BCC Graduate, Joel Weiss

On April 7, 2010, BCC's Media Technology and Film Society presented BCC alum Joel in a discussion, "Directing the Actor for a Student Film." Weiss has been an actor for 30 years and has appeared in more than 60 films, 60 plays and 30 television shows, and dozens of commercials, including multiple requests for him by acclaimed film directors Walter Hill, Garry Marshall and Robert Townsend. Weiss will be seen in the upcoming

Garry Marshall film *Valentine's Day* with Julia Roberts. He recently appeared in *Eagle Eye* and *Double Tap*.

Weiss kicked off his career as one of the stars of the classic film *The Warriors* and has appeared in multiple episodes of some television shows like *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *Bernie Mac* and *Mike Hammer, PI* with Stacy Keach.

MTV featured him as one of four actors, including

Blair Underwood, in *True Life: I'm an Actor*. He has had starring roles in productions of beloved plays like *The Front Page* (Earl Williams), *Career* (Pinkie Bonaparte) and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Billy Bibbit).

Weiss is a graduate of both Bronx Community College and Lehman College in the Bronx.

The BCC Media Technology and Film Society invited Hollywood actor, Joel Weiss to campus who conducted an acting workshop for students in CMS 62, "Beginning Film and Video Production." Students in Prof. Jeffrey Wisotsky's CMS 62, "Beginning Film and Video Production" class pose for a group photo in Meister Hall, Room S07. Weiss has been an actor for 30 years and has appeared in more than 60 films, 60 plays and 30 television shows, and dozens of commercials, including multiple requests for him by acclaimed film directors Walter Hill, Garry Marshall and Robert Townsend. Joel is also a graduate of Bronx Community College. Mr. Weiss was one of the stars (*Cropsey of the Rogue Gang*) of the classic Walter Hill Film, *The Warriors*. Prof. Wisotsky was also an extra in *The Warriors*.

Photo by Jeffrey Wisotsky



The BCC Media Technology and Film Society invited Cinematographer Dejan Georgevich to campus who conducted a lighting workshop for Media Technology students in the BCC tv studio on April 21, 2010. (From left to right) BCC Media Technology majors Brian Zabala and Brian Caravero worked as production assistants at the workshop. Georgevich is considered one of the leading DP's working in the HD format in feature and television productions. His recent production of *3 Lbs.* was shot with Panavision's Genesis cameras. He is currently filming the NBC series *Mercy*, the ABC/ Sony Pictures Television series *Cashmere Mafia*, and the Warner Bros. series *Gossip Girl*.

Photo by Jeffrey Wisotsky

Campus News

Great Musical Talents in the Bronx

By Carmela Perez

Jesse and Susan Vasquez, two aspiring singers from the Bronx, seek to get their big break with their new single, “Atrapada.” Jessie, aka J-Harmony, and Susan Vasquez, Gangsta Twin, are of Dominican descent. Born and raised in the Bronx, M.I., short for Mirror Image began their singing careers at the age of 15.

“This is what we always wanted to do,” states J-Harmony. “We always loved music,” Gangsta Twin adds, filled with excitement. M.I. experienced their first singing duet at South Street Seaport in downtown Manhattan, during the summer of 2003, where they were asked to perform for a Disney Channel executive.

M.I. has gone a long way since their first performance in 2003. They have sung in various places such as The Copacabana, Shea Stadium, where they performed the national anthem, and for a political event held for Mayor Michael Bloomberg. “We have performed in several states also, including Calle Ocho in Miami as well as Canada and Jersey,” says Gangsta Twin.

M.I. going back to their Dominican roots is changing their music style to Bachata from R&B. “We do any to every kind of music, except for country! We like pop, Hip Hop and R&B, Spanish, Spanglish. We like to do songs that people can relate to,” J-Harmony says. “Right now we are working on Bachata, were going to our roots because we are Dominican and that is something we love,” adds Gangsta Twin. Although Hip Hop and R&B music is their passion, M.I. hopes to break into the Spanish music industry and slowly conquer the Hip Hop and R&B industry as well. “Our main focus was R&B; we always listen to Mariah Carey and Alicia Keys. We always love to listen to that kind of music,” adds J-Harmony.

“Right now, we have our new single out, “Atrapada,” which you can find on YouTube. Search “MI – Atrapada,” and they will find our song there. You can also contact us on Facebook, Mirror Image NYC or MySpace also Mirror Image NYC,” says Gangsta Twin.

Now preparing for their first video, which will be directed by Hanse Balbuena, they are excited for what the future holds. “We are going to be filming it in different places. We will have scenes with the guys in a park, also in a club and, finally, in our backyard, pretty much telling the story of our song,” says J-Harmony. “We are doing our video on topic!” adds Gangsta Twin.

They are currently working on writing other songs as well as trying to stay focused and on track while keeping up with their daily routines at work. “We write our own music,” says Gangsta Twin. “I do the harmony of our songs; that’s why they call me J-Harmony,” adds J-Harmony.

With these talents they will go to great places. They are not your ordinary girls, these girls share their love for music that separates an artist from a GREAT artist, and their music is something everyone can relate to.

Check them out on Facebook, MySpace or Twitter – Mirror Image NYC.



The Peace Symbol: Free for All

By Paul Bland

The other day while walking to class I saw a peace symbol chalked onto the concrete column of Meister Hall. It brought me back to the time when I lived in the Haight Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco, the heart of the “Summer of Love” hippie event of cultural and political rebellion back in 1969. By the time I moved there, most of the remnants of that era were gone from the Haight, but you would still see shops carrying tie-died merchandise and t-shirts and posters with the peace symbol.

The peace symbol was originally the symbol of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Great Britain, and it was then adopted in the US as a symbol of peace and non-violence. During the protests of the 1960s it was meant to represent an opposition to war, a symbol of love and peace, of a revolution of ideas, a movement against the status quo. And it represented courage for those taking a stand against government, many of them students, individuals often seen as anti-American – or worse.

Looking at it today, it looks cool. A symbol from another era, really, but still relevant to our times today as many of us oppose the wars we are currently engaged in and hope for a revolution of social change and new ideology. It is interesting to note that it is a symbol without a copyright law-free for all to use.

Deliberately never copyrighted, the symbol is still recognized in great Britain as the logo for nuclear disarmament, but is known worldwide for peace and non-violence. No one has to pay or to seek permission before they use it. As a symbol of freedom, it is free for all (Design Boom).

The spring semester here at BCC is quickly coming to an end. Some of us will continue with summer school; others will graduate. Wherever you might be heading to this summer, may PEACE AND LOVE go with you.

Works Cited
Design boom. Peace Symbols. “The Origins and the Ideas behind the Symbols.” <http://www.designboom.com/contemporary/peace.html>.



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Campus News

A Year in the Life of a CUNY Student Leader By Muhammad Jalloh

It was the most challenging of times and the most crucial for me. It was the summer of 2007 and I was working a minimum wage job at a local retail store. But it was a time for me to make one of the most crucial decisions of my life: going back to school. I had always known my success in life was a function of how intimate I became with my books and how soon I returned to school to pursue my higher education studies and my dreams of becoming a computer scientist to be reckoned with. Such was the time and thus ran the dreams of my heart and the musings of my intellect. But this was the time and I had to make a decision. I had decided that this fall will not pass me by but that I will be in college, where I always knew I belonged. Such was the time and I had to decide.

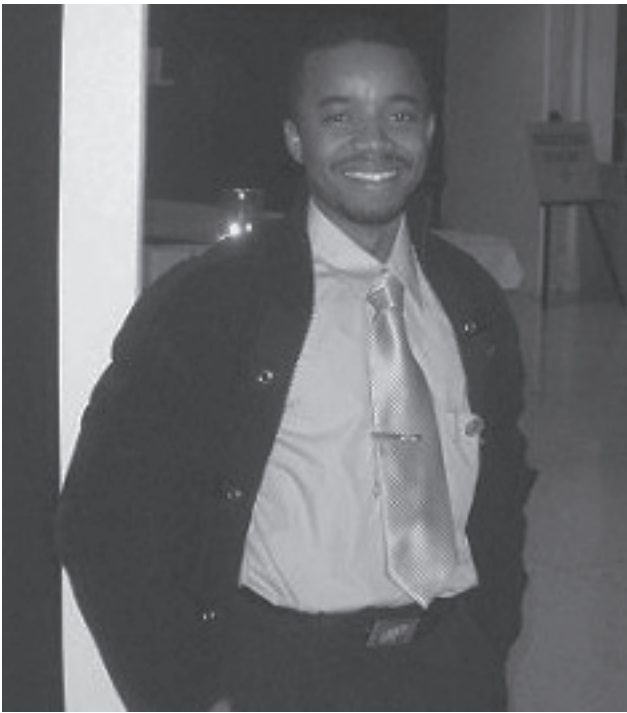
After applying and getting into Bronx Community College and taking the COMPASS tests, I responded to a letter inviting me to come for the New Students Orientation program, a BCC tradition to welcome, advise, register and inform new students about the different opportunities on campus. A few weeks later, I was one of the hundreds of new students walking the halls and occupying the classrooms of BCC. But this was just the beginning-the beginning of an experience in leadership that I would not have dreamed of on my own.

It all started at the entrance of the school cafeteria during the “Welcome Back Days” week. Having setup a table and handing out informational booklets and flyers regarding the different services and opportunities within the college was a tall young man who was trying to talk to everybody and eager to help anyone who passes by, especially the freshmen (and they were usually very easy to pick out of the haystack of students.) Looking puzzled and unsure, I walked over to him and took some of the materials he had on the table. I then relayed my concern to him: I wanted to know if there was a space on the campus that I can perform my daily Islamic prayers. “I know just how to help you, young man,” I can now imagine him thinking. He directed me to RBSC 306, which served both as a prayer room for the Muslim students as well as a meeting place for the members of the Muslim Students Association (MSA) and a quiet recluse for study from the sometimes noisy school library.

By his side (also helping out) was a lady who also gave me more information pertaining to other campus issues. Curious, I asked her, “Are you a student?” Amused, she threw the questions, “Do I look that young?” I later found out the man was no other than Manny Lopez, the assistant director of student life, and the lady was Melissa Kirk, the director of student life. They were often times referred to, in the college, as “the Dynamic Duo” for how effectively and efficiently they work together. It was the beginning of a relationship that would see me often in their offices asking for guidance, getting clarifications on ambiguous issues or sharing some productive time with them.

But that was just the beginning. In the spring of 2009, I stopped by the Office of Student Life’s office to pick up a form to apply for candidacy in the upcoming SGA elections. I had always wanted to be involved in the governance of the college, serve the student body, gain some advocacy knowledge and develop leadership skills that I can put to both immediate use as well as apply to my future career –wherever that took me. However, I was also very much involved with the Muslim Students’ Association (MSA) and serving as its vice president and web administrator of the club’s website, www.BCCMSA.com.

Fearing that the club may not have a strong leadership, I gave up the thought of running for the position of an SGA senator. But just until about 24 hours before the deadline for submission for candidacy, I met Mr. Lopez and Ms. Roslyn Gillespie, (then Vice President of the SGA) by the staircase and having asked me why I had not submitted my application all this while, I had told him that I may just stay with the MSA and give it the much-needed leadership rather than run for a senatorial position in the SGA. But he pointed out that my service as an SGA Senator is just an extension of my service in the MSA: I was just serving a broader and more diverse population-a student population that was 10,000 strong. I took it to heart and slept over it. The next day, I filled out and submitted my application. I launched my campaign and enlisted the help of my friends not just to vote, but to campaign for me as well. The result was a testament to the power of social networking and the possibilities that a strong and trusted network of friends and admirers could do. It was the beginning of an experience that I would



The author at the Black, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Conference in Albany, February 2010.

always cherish.

A few weeks later, the election results were released: I was among the top 15 candidates that were elected to form the next SGA body. The SGA executive elections followed next. I ran for the offices of president, secretary and legal and legislative representative and lost all three. It was a sour pill to swallow, but another lesson learned: connect on time with potential voters and rivals as numbers, not competency or speeches, win elections. A friend of mine called the results a “travesty.” But it was more than that: it was an opportunity to learn...the hard way.

Enter, the CUNY Leadership Academy

A few days later, I received an email from the (then) CUNY Leadership Academy informing me that I have been nominated to be a fellow of the academy and undergo a yearlong leadership training program and experience. I immediately knew whose handiwork this was. I met him a few days later while going up the stairs in the Student Center. “Yes, it is. I have been looking out for you”, Mr. Lopez admitted. It was an honor I could not have asked for, especially since I did not even know about the existence of the Academy. I sent in the application and waited for the results. But they were many weeks in the making.

Meanwhile, the new SGA senators were invited to attend the New Leadership Challenge Conference at Brooklyn College on June 12th, put together by the CUNY Council of Student Life Directors and the CUNY Leadership Academy, where they will meet with other SGA senators from the different CUNY colleges to learn the skills necessary to be effective leaders in the various schools. But the leadership skills learned and acquired were not all that the students took away from this seminar. I was particularly happy that I was able to meet so many student leaders from all across CUNY who faced the same challenges, had the same hopes and were committed to working for the good of the over 400,000 students that see CUNY as their bridge to their future and the missing link between them and their success in life. It was an exhilarating experience, to say the least.

During this time, the CUNY Leadership Academy was reviewing the over twelve dozen applications to the academy that they received. A few weeks later, 60 of the applicants were selected to appear for a final interview session that included a simulated group project planning and execution and a personal interview for each of the candidates. I had also received a letter asking me to choose one of many available dates for my interview. Wednesday afternoon, the last day of the interviews, seemed good to me and realistic based on my schedule. It was a challenge working with seven other students from different CUNY colleges and with different leadership experiences to put together a project from planning to execution. Ms. Julie Agosto, (the CUNY Corps and CUNY service learning coordinator) and Mr. Derrick Boone (CUNY coordinator for student life), were in the room observing and taking notes about how effectively the students worked together and how efficiently they were able to adjust to working

with others. It was a challenge. Being somewhat shy and not “pushy enough”, I thought I had little hope of being selected as one of the Fellows for the year.

In between working on the group project, the candidates were called one after the other for their individual interviews with Dr. Joe-Joe McManus (the executive director of the academy), Ms. Christina Joseph, (the academy’s coordinator for special programs and professional development) and two other alumni of the academy. Having recently served on the BCC Search Committee for the vice president for student development and enrollment management, I seemed more confident with the personal interview session as I have been preconditioned to think like an interviewer and seemed to be in a better position to know what was expected of me and the potential loopholes that I had to avoid that may cost me the opportunity to be one of the fellows for the year. Walking home later that day, I was sure of one thing: if everyone else in the group made it into the Academy, I will have a chance; but if there had to be eliminations, I may just be the first to be let go.

However, towards the end of July, I received an email from the academy: I had been chosen as one of the 25 students this year to undergo the yearlong leadership training experience as fellows of the academy. It was one of the happiest emails I had ever read in a long time. To be one of only 25 students out of CUNY’s 400,000 students to be accepted into the CUNY Leadership Academy was a privilege whose significance was never lost.

During this time, the new senators of the BCC SGA had assumed office and were undergoing an intensive six-day leadership training put together by the Office of Student Life to prepare them for the challenges ahead of serving the student body as they promised during the campaign season and expected of them. It was during one of these training sessions that Mr. Laconia Therrio came in as one of our scheduled speakers. He touched on the issue of diversity and how importance it was that the people tell their “stories” to find commonalities and establish unity in the world. This led me to developing www.MetroTribes.com, a website devoted to celebrating cultural diversity by sharing cultural experiences and histories that have the potential to bridge the cultural gap between the various ethnicities and races of the world instead of widening it.

The College president, Dr. Carolyn Williams and the (now retired) vice president for student development and enrollment management, Dr. Otis Hill, also came in and spoke to the new student leaders to encourage and remind them of their responsibilities and expectations both as students and student leaders on the campus. Dr. Ruth Bass (then chair of the BCC Senate) also came in to talk to us about how the College Senate works and the role of the SGA senators in helping it to function efficiently and effectively.

To the average student, it may seem that, thus far, I had had enough leadership training to last me for a long time. And they would be right. Usually right. Except that in August, I was at the College of Staten Island for the two-day orientation program for the new fellows of the CUNY Leadership Academy. For the first time, all 25 of the fellows met and were in the same place to learn about what it takes to make it through the year in the Academy. Here, I also met two other SGA senators from other CUNY schools who had made it in as Fellows: Christopher Browne (Brooklyn College) and Evita Belmonte (City Tech). Alyna Brown (Lehman College) and Tyesha Allen (BMCC), both of whom had been part of my interview group, had also made it into the academy. It was amazing to meet students of different ages, diverse cultural backgrounds and nationalities and various academic pursuits in the same place, at the same time, for the same reason: they had been chosen as CUNY’s best and brightest and now had to undergo a yearlong intensive training program to sharpen their leadership skills, expand their cultural horizons and learn firsthand the challenges of global leadership and how cultures, politics, economics, selfless service and other factors played a key role in how leadership functions and how leaders can make the best impact on their societies without compromising their personal values or dispelling the values of others because they seem “different.”

Next, Community Service

A few days into the fall semester, I had the opportunity to do my first community service event since I started college. It was on September 11th, a day that

Campus News



“The Fellows that Could”: The Malave Leadership Academy Fellows at the Innovation Workshop at John Jay College of Criminal Justice with the team from “The Medici Effect.” Standing, from L-R: Julie Agosto (CUNY Corps and Service Learning Coordinator), Muhammad Jalloh (BCC), Ayesha Berte (Lehman College), Evita Belmonte (City Tech), Linda Gomez (CSI), Daysi Manzano (York College), Jasmine Patel (Brooklyn College), Christopher Browne (Brooklyn College), Liliete Lopez (Hostos CC), Fitz King (John Jay), Karishma Chawla (Brooklyn College), Philip Parris (Medgar Evers), Leen Feliciano (QCC), Brant Douglas (Medgar Evers), Qimei Luo (CSI), Alyna Brown (Lehman College), Keisha Fuentes (Executive Assistant to the director of the Academy), Sweet Joy (Medici Effect Team), Christina Joseph (coordinator for special programs and professional development). Sitting, from L-R: Edgar Romero (LaGuardia CC), William Leverett (Queens College), Moses Kanduri (KCC), and Dr. Joe-Joe McManus (executive director of the Academy), Christian (Medici Effect), Katrina Hannan (CSI), Jimmy Domdeth (CSI), Jay-Sheree Allen (City College) and Carlos Ruiz (Baruch).

has been set aside as the “National Day of Service” to encourage Americans to devote themselves to help their communities by volunteering their time and energy and helping to remember the victims of the tragedy of 9/11. As a Muslim, this held special significance to me. I consider myself above average when it comes to a conceptual and contextual understanding of Islam and Islamic Law. But I also know that Muslims have been blamed for the tragedy of 9/11 eight years earlier. It was also clear that current US foreign policy towards the Muslim world was not the most favorable. But I found solace in knowing that I can and should be able to bridge the cultural gap between “East and West” and the Muslim and Western world. And, this was one of those perfect opportunities to gauge the feelings on the “American side.” Working alongside other Fellows and staff members of the Academy at the HELP USA Wards Island rehabilitation center and helping to clear the facility of unneeded junk and giving it a “facelift” by helping to paint it, it became clear to me that one of the most effective ways to unite people was to have them put aside their trivial differences and work together to make life better for the less-privileged members of our world.

During this time, school was already in session and I was also very much involved in the BCC Student Government Association. At an earlier meeting, the SGA had chosen to put me forward as the sole candidate for the vice-chairperson of the College Senate (a post traditionally held by the SGA President). At the first Senate meeting, I was nominated by my colleagues for the position. The vice president of the SGA, Omar Murray, had also decided to run for the same position during this Senate meeting. After the “campaign speeches” were done and the votes were cast and in, I beat him by 31 votes to 15 to become the vice-chair of the BCC Senate.

In the following months, the academy gave me the opportunity to attend both the MtvU Woodie Awards (which recognizes the best of radio, musical and media excellence on America’s colleges and universities). I was also, along with the other fellows, invited to attend the “Investing in Futures” higher education event organized by *The New York Times* and CUNY and heavily attended by stakeholders in higher education, the unions and others. This was an opportunity for me to widen my horizon, expand my cultural competence and hear and understand the challenges facing public higher education in the US from those intimately involved in the system, including CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein and Dr. Muriel Howard, the president of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU). The contacts I made at this event were also invaluable.

Parties, Retreats, Conferences, and Conventions

Around the same time, I was also involved in the BCC SGA’s planning and execution of both the “Welcome Back” Party and the Halloween Party, events that had become SGA traditions over the years. Being rather unaccustomed to attending parties and very uncomfortable in the arts of parties, I had engaged myself in what I could do best: conduct interviews, take pictures and shoot videos.

By mid-December when the finals came around and the winter break came knocking, I was already looking forward to the Fellows Retreat put together by the CUNY Leadership Academy for the 2009-2010 cohort. The two-day retreat was a welcome relief from the previous weeks of finals and a great way to usher in the New Year. But the retreat was just a good beginning for what promised to be a year full of experiences for the fellows. At around this time also, the University was considering renaming the academy after the former vice-chancellor for budget and finance Ernesto Malave, who had passed away in Puerto Rico while attending the “Somos El Futuro” Conference.

During Presidents’ Day weekend in February, I joined the other senators of the BCC SGA and our mentors from the Office of Student Life, Manny Lopez and Regina Smith, to travel to Albany for the 39th Annual Black, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Conference. It was a great opportunity to meet and hear from the stakeholders in the state’s political system, including Gov. David Patterson, President Ruben Diaz of the Bronx and many other council members and legislative representatives, including Hassel Thompson, Marcus Crespo, Pedro Espada and Nick Perry (the chair of the Legislative Conference).

A week later, I was on my way to Tucson, Arizona, along with 11 other fellows and two staff members of the CUNY Leadership Academy for the annual National Collegiate Leadership Conference. Being my first time traveling to the American Southwest, it was an invaluable opportunity for me to meet other student leaders from different parts of the country and establish a strong social and professional network of like-minded people from diverse backgrounds, academic pursuits and socio-political interests. Realizing the enormity of the opportunity at hand, I had gone ahead and finally launched my long-in-the-making social networking site, www.Rumiya.com. I had also ordered some business cards to make it easier for me to share my information with others without risking their losing them if they lose piece of paper I scribble my contact information on. For the first time, I came into contact with “real” Native Americans, usually thought by many people to be almost extinct. I met and made friends with people from both the Navajo and Pueblo tribes. It was striking to note that many of them may be easily mistaken to be Hispanics, whether as a result of the way they look (many look very Mexican) or the names that they bear.

A few weeks later, I was also sponsored by *The Communicator* to attend the annual National College Media Convention at the Marriot Marquis Hotel in Times Square. Having attended the conference as an official delegate of BCC the previous year, I knew how invaluable and critical the sessions could be when it comes to learning and applying the science and art of journalism. I also had the opportunity to meet Mark Halperin, *Time* magazine’s editor-at-large and co-author of *Game Change*, one of the hottest political narratives of the decade that chronicles the historic campaigns of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, John McCain and Sarah Palin and the political dealings, interests and interactions that played behind the scenes. The previous year, I had the opportunity to meet Byron Pitts, Charles Gibson and Brian Storm, all persons to be reckoned with in the field of journalism. Here, I was able

to learn valuable newsroom management skills, pointed to newspaper editing resources, introduced to the power and potential of multimedia journalism and given insider perspectives on some of the best opportunities available within this industry, including internships and portfolio creation. I was also able to meet and keep in touch with people who would have a lasting impact on how I approach journalism and view the world. It was nothing short of an experience that gave me a fresh perspective on the future and potentials of journalism.

The Malave Leadership Academy

While it may seem that I had done my own fair share of traveling, learning and experiencing leadership, appreciating service, and realizing and embracing the rich diversity of our world, the (now renamed) Malave Leadership Academy had one more experience in store for me. This came in the form of the “Cincinnati Urban Experience,” an alternate spring break opportunity volunteering to work with the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless in far-away Ohio. This was an opportunity to realize that, despite the wealth of America and the somewhat carefree and luxurious lifestyle (by world standards) that many of us lead, homelessness and hunger were as real in almost every American city as daylight. It was touching to see both the blacks and whites languishing in abject poverty and deprivation while the big corporations have a free rein to maltreat them as they want while their elected representatives watch on without even raising an eyebrow. Cooking and cleaning at the soup kitchens, packing canned foods for families at the food pantry, cleaning gardens and recreational centers and observing and interacting with those who rarely get help and have almost lost hope in themselves, the corporations and especially their elected representatives, it was as frustrating as it was touching for the Fellows that had the opportunity to take part in this experience. It was also a wakeup call to the fact that while there is supposed to be a system in place to protect every American from humiliation, abandonment and abuse by either the corporations or the government, the people always have to initiate change in their societies if they ever have to move forward.



“The Making of Leaders”: The SGA senators at the BCC Leadership Training Sessions

L-R: Melissa Kirk (director of student life), Raya Baylor (SGA treasurer), Manny Lopez (assistant director of student life), Muhammad Jalloh (vice-chair of Senate), Sebastian Pessoa (SGA senator), Leona Alfred (SGA executive secretary), Omar Murray (SGA vice president), Margaret Rodriguez (SGA president). Sitting: Dr. Otis Hill (former vice president for student development and enrollment management) and Dr. Carolyn Williams (president of BCC).

Reflections on a Year

After a year serving in the BCC SGA, working alongside other fellows of the Malave Leadership Academy to better acquire the necessary leadership skills needed for an effective and efficient leadership system that works for our world, and taking advantage of the opportunities that came my way from them, I realize that not every student may get the same opportunities as I did and not everyone may have the “prepared mind” to recognize the challenges and embrace the invaluable opportunities that present themselves to them. But I also know that my experience this past year is a testament to the fact that a quality CUNY education and co-curricular experience may be all one needs to acquire the skills needed to make a difference in our communities and the increasingly globalized world that we live in and must adapt to.

Campus News

A New College Garden

By Aliza Koszuk

This spring is an especially great time at BCC because – there is a garden growing on campus! ASAP (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs) selected six students for their leadership program. They were given the responsibility to create a project that would benefit students in some way. The idea of creating a garden seemed like a positive and uplifting way to enhance the lives of BCC students.

Living in an urban setting can sometimes be very stressful. We can easily forget nature and all that it has to offer. Spending some time planting or watering a garden can bring a smile to one's face, just like it did to the ASAP students who participated in the first day of planting. Everyone was ready to roll up their sleeves, get a little dirt on their hands, and play a part in this new endeavor. So far we have planted herbs such as basil, thyme, oregano, and even strawberries. It was a great experience to see so many enthusiastic students gather together and help BCC Go Green!

On April 29th the ASAP Leadership Program also made a presentation for other ASAP students. It was on environmental issues that affect all of us who are part of the Bronx community. There is an immense amount of air pollution due to waste transfer centers, bus depots, and traffic running through the Bronx area. As a result, asthma rates are very high. The presentation addressed these issues and presented some thoughts on how a garden can contribute to making a difference.

Aside from the aesthetic beauty of plants, they also contribute to our health and well being. Plants absorb the toxins in our atmosphere, and create the oxygen we need to live. Breathing in fresh air is very important for each one of us. Therefore, any small effort we can make to increase the amount of greenery that surrounds us will greatly benefit us all. The other reason to create a garden is because it is fun! You can take a break from your academic studies, spend some time with your friends, and slow down from the fast pace of New York City.

The garden is still in its first stages of development, and we have lots of grow beds and still lots of planting to do. We welcome anyone in the college community to join us in our continued effort to create an outstanding garden. We have even given some thought to creating a gardening club!

The garden is located behind Colston Hall, near where the new children's daycare center is located. Come check it out and join us for a day of gardening. We want to keep the BCC garden healthy and alive for a long time to come! If you are interested in helping us maintain the garden, feel free to contact the gardening team at bccgarden@gmail.com.

Have a great day and good luck on your finals!



The author in the garden.

BCC

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Faculty Views

Health and Fitness with Dr. Wayne Six Guidelines for Training



EXERCISE SAFETY AND INJURY PREVENTION

Hot Weather and heat Stress

Human being depends on a relatively constant body temperature to survive. An increase of just a few degrees in body temperature can quickly lead to distress and even death. Exercise safety in a high-temperature environment depends on the body's ability to dissipate heat and maintain blood flow to active muscles. Heat from exercise is released through evaporation of sweat, which cools the skin and the circulation near the surface of the body. People with a low level of fitness are a greater risk for problems associated with heat stress, which can include dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and life threatening heatstroke.

Dehydration

Your body needs water to carry out many chemical reactions and to regulate body temperature. Sweating during exercise depletes your body's water supply and can lead to dehydration. Drink fluids before, during and after exercise. As a general rule drink at least 2 cups (16 ounces) of fluid 2 hours before exercise and then 8 ounces every 20 minutes of exercise.

Terms To Be Aware

- 1. Heat Cramps** result from a sudden development of muscle spasms and pain associated with intense exercise in hot weather.
- 2. Heat Exhaustion** is heat illness related to dehydration resulting from exertion in hot weather.
- 3. Heatstroke** is a severe and often fatal heat illness produced by exposure to very high temperatures, especially when combined with intense exercise, characterized by significantly elevated core body temperature.
- 4. Heat Indexes** are a measure of how hot it feels when you combine temperature with relative humidity.

If you have any questions or comments, please email me at: Wellness4all@yahoo.com

Be well.
Dr. Wayne
Health, Physical Education and Wellness



Following Directions; Making the Grade A Note on Following Instructions

By Ragnhild Utheim

I recently went to park my car in a newly renovated automated parking lot, rushing in distracted overdrive to catch a train. A stressed out mom of two with a job to get to and studies to complete, the directions for how to procure my parking spot were but a nuisance in my mind. I followed the prompts provided on the ticket booth interface, inserted my \$10 bill and waited for \$5 in change. Nothing. Looking up, down and around the booth, I soon discovered a set of instructions with warnings posted throughout the booth's hutch. No change. I was pissed and aggravated – such a senseless and unnecessary mistake.

Following directions seems such a given that we usually give it little attention. Yet it is one of those perennial problems that professors perpetually complain about. One professor I know has made a habit of demonstrating his point with an entertaining class activity entitled "Following Directions; Making the Grade." The exercise is a mock test in student attentiveness, and after mimicking some classical test-taking etiquette requests that students "remain seated when they are finished, and give those who are still working the respect and silence that they enjoyed." The instructions continue as follows:

When you are finished, wait for the instructor to come to your seat and collect this test. Failure to comply will result in an automatic "F." If you have any questions, raise your hand and direct the said question to the instructor –no one else. This test is not to be taken lightly or seriously. After printing your name on the line provided, do, say, and write no further. Good luck!

Instructions: Be certain to follow any and all instructions as closely as possible. Remember the importance of order or its non-importance.

Name: _____

- 1. Circle all the words in this sentence that begin with a "B", "C", "S", or "W".**
- 2. Say hello –Quietly– to the person sitting to your right. (Note: if no one is to your right, say "AHHHHH"— quietly; you do not want to distract the other students taking this test.)**

And so on....

I was told that on average, roughly half the class subjected to this activity fail to follow the instructions, some catching on to the hoax sooner; some later. The exercise is meant as an amusing reminder of certain details we so take for granted that we tend to overlook their significance. It does not, of course, account for the importance of instructional clarity, or ambiguities and the seeming "trick" questions that can appear on tests or assignments – particularly standardized ones that are inappropriately geared toward a prescribed and "typical" student population. Nor does it account for performance anxiety and the ways in which student fear of testing (and learning more generally) can interfere with your thinking faculties. Moreover, it does not account for more substantive problems in comprehension, what we commonly refer to as "higher order thinking skills" in WAC. Indeed, sometimes we might not truly understand what we are being asked to do. But all the more reason for students to carefully read and be sure they understand a set of directions before they can systematically follow them.

A simple piece of advice for accomplishing the good grades that most students hope for is thus to begin by reading ALL assignment instructions and course goals carefully. Always ask your professor to clarify any questions or concerns that you have –in good time. Do NOT wait to decipher an assignment's directions, for instance, until the night before it's due and you're ready to hack away. Waiting for the eleventh hour to tackle any requirement is always a bad idea, but can become particularly taxing if you suddenly discover that you are unclear about the expectations. Read through instructions early on. Use writing-to-learn tools like underlining, commenting in the margins, and brainstorming –jotting down your ideas in writing– when you read through an assignment's description. Pull out the essence of what you think you are supposed to do and check in with your professor –in class, or privately if you prefer. Create an outline, template or rubric (sometimes provided by professors) for what you are expected to produce, and follow it. Once you work through and complete your project, check it against this outline. Making sure you accurately understand and can adequately respond to the various aspects of an assignment will bring you a long way toward good results.

Ragnhild Utheim is one of BCC's six Writing Fellows. To learn more about WAC and how Writing Fellows can assist students and faculty, especially in Writing Intensive courses, visit us online at: www.bcc.cuny.edu/WAC/.

The Outside View

Empowering Lives in The Bronx and South Africa: BCC and UKZN Students Correspond

By Dr. Andrea Parmegiani

Those of you who have taken an English class with me know about my love for South Africa, a country where I have lived, studied and taught. It is a country which I see as my own, even though I only discovered it in my late thirties. My love for this place is obvious to anyone who walks through my office door, which is covered with pictures of places and people from South Africa that have changed my life and make me want to go back whenever I can.

My love for South Africa also comes through when I teach, as I often use books written in that part of the world. *Kaffir Boy*, a memoir written by a black South African man who grew up under apartheid, helps me inspire BCC students to overcome the challenges they face as learners, workers, parents, and family members, while they seek to transform their lives for the better with an education. I also use stories written by some of the students I was lucky enough to work with in South Africa, who had to face enormous difficulties in order to be able to go to college. Whenever I do, my impression is that BCC students are left with a much better sense of who they are and what they can do with their lives.



This semester, I was able to spend two months in South Africa at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), in Durban, South Africa’s third largest city. While I was there, I started a partnership to bring students on both sides of the Atlantic a little closer.

UKZN is like another home for me. In 2007, I was invited to teach a graduate course there, and at the same time, I spent a semester observing and interviewing students taking remedial courses as part of the research for my Ph.D. My goal was to get a better understanding of the challenges college students face when they take English courses, so that I could become a more effective teacher.

Last February, I returned to UKZN and I spent a week with 25 South African students taking remedial writing courses. Together with their instructor, Professor Veena Lutchman, I ran a workshop to help them write essays about the way they empowered themselves in their lives.

The first thing we did was reading some of the amazing personal stories my BCC students wrote in Fall 2009. While each story is different, they all have one theme in common: students’ ability to overcome challenges and to transform their lives for the better. For example, one of these stories was written by a young woman who was diagnosed with bone cancer when she was 8; her leg was amputated when she was 10. Despite all this, she has been able to live a fulfilling and successful life and to be a role

model to many people who met her. Another story was written by a boy who was born in a small village in Ghana, where there was not much, other than huts and farmland. Because his father was a polygamist, his mother rejected him, so he grew up with a foster mother in a family that did not value education. Nevertheless, he worked really hard to do well in school, and with the help of some missionaries, he was admitted to a very competitive college in Ghana before he emigrated to the United States. He is now an exemplary student at Bronx Community College who inspires other students with his talent and determination.

As I expected, students in South Africa were moved by these stories, and after we had a discussion of the theme of empowerment, they felt ready to write their own. Professor Lutchman and I guided them through the writing process with a series of activities. We first asked students to jot down some notes about all the difficulties they had to overcome to be where they are today in life. Then we paired them up, encouraged them to share ideas and to start writing a first draft. I made myself available for consultations after class and the following day. Two days later, we paired students up once again. We asked them to read their stories to each other and give feedback. Then, a few volunteers read their stories to the rest of the class.

It is very difficult, even for an English professor, to express how moved, inspired, and humbled we all felt by

the stories that were shared that day. I will not even try to tell you what sort of challenges some of these students had to go through to survive and to be admitted to a prestigious university in South Africa. Instead, I will let these stories speak for themselves through *The Communicator*. So look for them in the next issue: I have no doubt that you will also feel moved and inspired. And who knows? Maybe you will also want to write and submit your own story of empowerment.

This is exactly what I am hoping to achieve with this partnership: students inspiring each other with their stories, realizing how much they have already achieved and how much they can transform their lives with the education they are receiving.

As part of this partnership, every student in the learning community cluster with Professor [Julie] Bolt (English 02), Professor [Georgene] Osborne (RDL 02), and Professor [Melissa] Gonzales (OCD 01), will correspond with one of the South African students I met last February and exchange a personal essay about his/her personal empowerment. My hope is that with time, this partnership will grow by involving more classes. I also dream that one day, this partnership will make it possible for an outstanding BCC student to study in South Africa for a semester and vice-versa. This is just a dream for now, but as so many students’ stories prove, there is a lot we can do to make our dreams come true.

Gallina del Cuidad IV:
Swiper, Chicken as Lead Dog

By Massawa Lawson

Let’s talk about Swiper, an aggressive Silver Lanshan chicken in my flock of now 15-week-old pullets who earned the nickname the old fashioned way – by swiping. Anything fed to the flock from the first day they arrived would eventually wind up in the tight grip of the mostly white Swiper’s beak. Swiper moves fluidly, legs in constant motion while the body floats above, using quick changes in direction and 360s to avoid the hungry pecks of the rest of the flock. To Swiper, it came easy – the bird can just flat out boogie – Swiper would have made a great running back. To me it seemed Swiper was swiping for the pure joy of the chase. As Swiper and the flock progressed, and the treats grew larger and tastier, Swiper continued to claim more than his share. I’ve fed the birds baked salmon, meal worms, night crawlers, red wigglers, wax worms, and even a lizard.

Swiper has been well taken care of and, once the flock was moved outdoors, the swiping continued. It turns out there were plenty of insects, worms and snakes for them to have – which saves me from running to the pet store and paying for the stuff. So, with my help, Swiper has continued his swiping ways, following me around while I hoe the earth to reveal the juicy worms Swiper craves - standing close to the spot I’m hacking at unafraid of the blade like a trusty hound. The garter snakes are the best treat the hens can get – I imagine – inside that living creature must be every nutrient a chicken needs to grow large and lay healthy eggs. So when I find a snake, I cut it (with garden shears) into small pieces so all the hens can share in the snake essence (there’s a little blood). Each one I’ve found is roughly twelve inches long. Well, about two weeks ago Swiper found a snake – a nice big one –



and darted and danced around the 25 foot by 8 foot run, gulping down the snake as fast as possible. I was proud of Swiper – it was my hope from the start that the hens would become successful rangers in the yard for the best possible natural diet as G-d intended. It was a beautiful sunny day and all the sleepless nights I spent caring for and raising my flock were worth it – they were becoming self sufficient.

Early the next morning, I let the flock out, and Swiper ran to the far end of the run and did something unusual. Standing tall and erect, Swiper began flapping white wings sturdily against a puffed out chest and let loose a cough – a dry puff of a sound. I wondered if the snake had made Swiper sick – maybe he ate too much? Then Swiper flapped and coughed again and again and then I realized what I was witnessing – Swiper’s first crow.

Swiper was not a hen. Swiper is a rooster. His crow is louder now and he’s a healthy bird so it will only

get louder. It’s an amazing cat deterrent as they seem to think Swiper is some kind of a dog, and cats scatter when he lets out a cockle doodle doo. I want to keep him for as long as possible – he’s really become my lead “dog” in the flock and I am worried that a neighbor will complain and either animal control or the police will force me to remove Swiper from the flock. It’s inevitable and I’ll deal with it when the time comes. For now, I will enjoy Swiper and the protection he provides the flock.

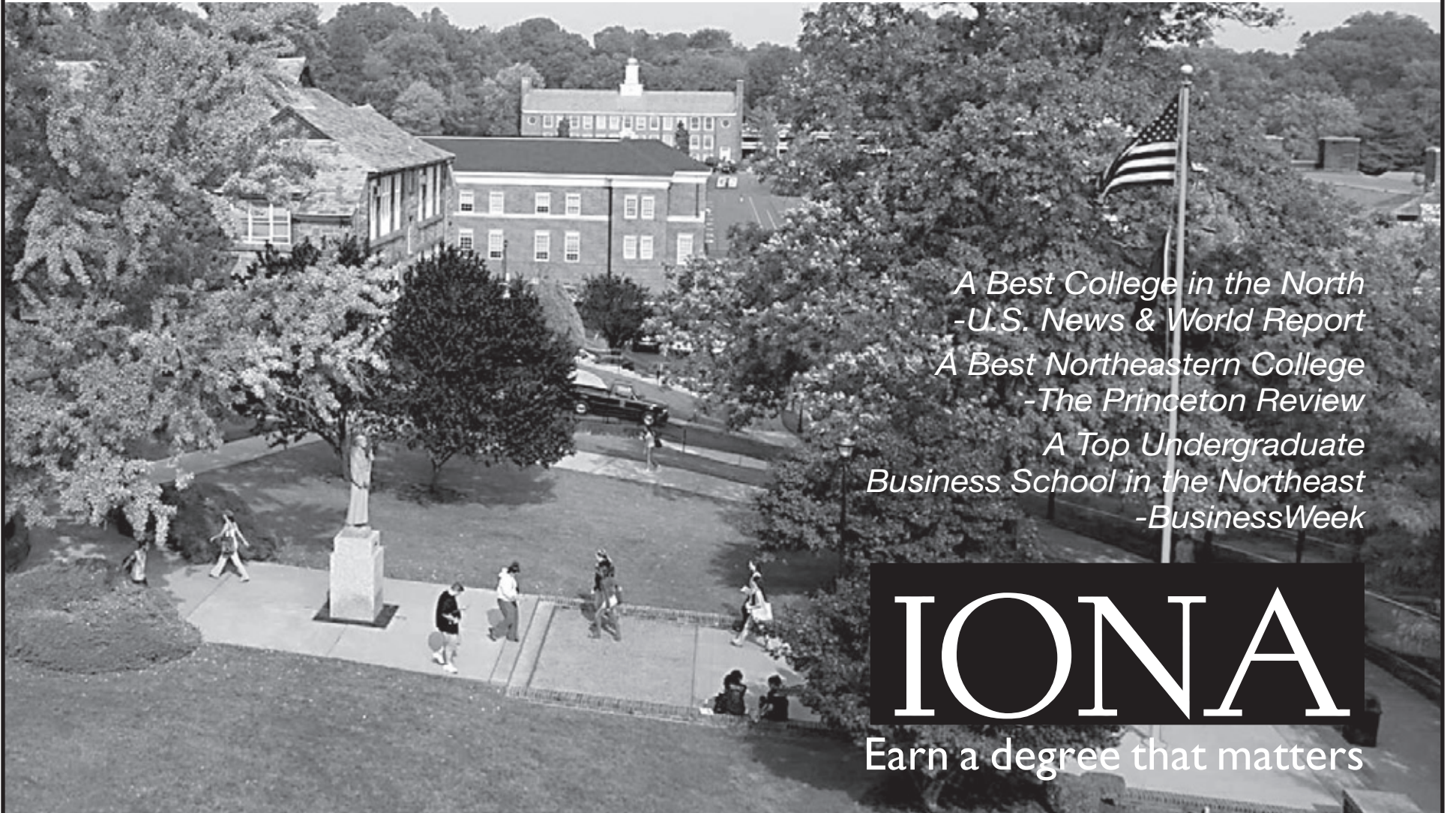
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Poetry Corner

Portrait of the Road

By Beatriz Ramirez

Left or Right
Wandering
Any which way is worthy of wondering
Careening corners and caressing cinder blocks
Stretching ever so far, ever so wide, to expand my grasp
of all I can find
Contorting correctly, carefully calming
Uncomfortably posed, deformed demeanor of twisted
bones
In the hearts of holy housing
Those unaware and complete in their lives
A green mind that follows dancing paper
Get Low, Get Low, to the lowest point
Sprouting colors from my emotional seasons
Shred my skin to sooth the scenery
Free from implications of your social storm
With contemplation through the concrete
Tasting the tart sun
Breathing blue skies
Exhaling dark clouds
Deeper to fathom
To live
To drink
To eat
To feel
Or not feel
It's cold
But it's home
Safely sedentary in soil
Sinking softly
Firmly
Foundation is forged

It Takes a Mistake

By Erwin Fernandez

Our Perfection is our imperfection
It is a gift to be wrong
For mistakes to make us strong
Within US, Ignorance must belong

1 + 1 = 2 + 2 = 4 ...

By Erwin Fernandez

In times of uncertainty
In thinking individually
But deciding and acting collectively

A Common Denial

By Erwin Fernandez

It is let known to us enough
So that we feel as if enough we know
But not enough
So that enough we actually know



Return To Sender

By Ibrahim Siddiq aka P.O.E.T

I'm writing you a letter that I know you'll never receive
expressing my sorrow is a goal I know I'll never achieve
And even if I could I wouldn't know where to begin
Because where ever I start it hurts my heart
Knowing there's an end
If I had the opportunity to convey my regret, I wouldn't
know how
She was my girlfriend at the time, but you know that by
now
She and I had been through everything we had history
I didn't know anything about you, what intrigued me was
your mystery
I swore she was the one I would marry but at that point
we weren't happy
It's weird but I was somewhat relieved when our situation
had risen
Because there was something missing
At the time I felt confined, there was a lot on my mind
I needed to briefly break out and you seemed like the
perfect escape route
I remember the day she found out
Our relationship, once open and honest was then
covered in lies
The
situation was the main cause for our demise
And although she said she didn't blame me...I could see
it in her eyes
She tried to make excuses and give me a way out
The truth is I wanted you both, but even then I knew that
wouldn't play out
So I had to either choose you or lose you
And I knew once I let you go I could never get you back
I live every moment of my life with that fact
I tried to epitomize your existence but was met with
resistance
Because I could never contain your worth with any set of
words my brain could ever birth
And it hurts to know I couldn't give you what you
deserved
I wish I could go back and change every wrong second,
every minute and every hour
It's like an unbloomed flower, never to be seen or felt
Our love, a flower never to be smelled
I often wonder about how it would've been... about how
it could be
My girl, she meant the world to me
But for you, I would have gave up the world you see
And even though we parted before
a relationship could even be started
I love you with all my heart and that you can trust

Love,
Your father who never was

Poem One

By Robert Josman

Stars above hear my song
For only an angel
could I have waited so long
An angel that is like the snow upon the hill
lying cold and still
Waiting for a chance to make the world
warm and soft again
I can only hope that
this angel knows
that with her beauty
to look upon my heart and soul could never die
because her beauty is the reason that spring is warm and soft
I can only hope that this angel of spring
will choose to prowl the world with me

Poem Two

By Robert Josman

The nursery rhyme has changed
compulsion rules
Mary's little lambs are now raised by wolves
A voyeur with wings flashes a cure
She knows of forbidden things
and they are lonely in their lure

They envy her ways
seven deadly sins
She could seize the day,
she could seize the hour

Her ideas need no explanation,
her expressions need no tales
For her beauty lives from within

Ode to Ahmed

By Saba Sarwar

If you combine the smell of the roses,
Falling of the rain drops,
Countless leaves on the tree,
Forest full of animals singing with joy,
Freedom of the birds,
Sweetness of chocolates,
Brightness of the sunny day,
Smiles of the moon,
Twinkle of stars,
Waves racing on ocean,
Shivers within my body,
Priceless pearls,
They express my love for you,
And remind me of you,
Only you, yes the beloved of the Most Gracious, Ahmed.

Note: Ahmed is one of the about 200 names/attributes that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) is known by in Islamic literature.

Soon & Very Soon

By Bill Murray

*(poem inspired by Andraé Crouch and dedicated to Regina Smith and Jim Sheehan)
Friday, July 10, 2009*

Somebody sang
“Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King”

Undeniably and assuredly
We are going to see the King

My God loves without fail
So shout a song of praise for him!

“Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King”
“Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King”

We are a witness, his missioners and pupils
We're devil dodging Lucifer with scruples

“Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King”
So sing a joyful hymn for Him!

The Lord of lords, The Son of Man, The Prince of
Peace
And by whom we were saved upon his decease

Somebody sang
“Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King”

Undeniably and assuredly
He returned to life after that last supper, in Easter

Undeniable and assuredly
His Holy ghost crossed the threshold of this ether

“Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King”
“Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King”

My God is the morning star; my dove of afar
So say “Amazing Grace!” for he has brought me
safely thus far

“No more crying there...no more dying there, we are
going to see the King”

Angels will trumpet seven in court of conscience, on
the day of reckoning
In heaven's tribunal of penance we are going to see
the King

‘Zekiel saw the chariot, a wheel in the middle of a
wheel
True and just are his bowl judgments, true and just
are our fates sealed

Take him on faith, he loves every living thing!
“Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King”

Poetry Corner

For the Love of Thee By Muhammad Jalloh

Once upon a heavy heart,
When love beckonests,
Shuns idle rests,
And echoes to be heard.

There lived a bearded chap,
Who dreamed of a maiden in a flowing cap,
Flowing down her bosom like a heavenly tap,
Who transported his mind in an ambiguous wrap.

Like the constellations of heaven was her face,
Which left lightning lamps in her trace.
To her he did quill without menace,
On a French papyrus to seek her grace:

For the Love of Thee and thine for me,
For the sake of Him who planted thy soul in the heart of me,
Hold my heart in bondage, I prithee,
In bondage to thy love for the sake of we.

I prithee to tell, of generations come and gone,
And even those yet unborn,
Who tickles thy mind and makes thee smile,
Smiles of love stretching for a mile.

I prithee tell who makes thee cry,
Tears of love that never dry,
Like a hearty tide on a summer Nile,
Or trailing the trail of love over many a mile.

Who makes thy heart skip a beat,
Or enter into love’s ecstatic feat,
I prithee, tell thy tale of love,
And for whom was borne the message of thy dove.

To whom belongests the warmth of thy mind,
Reveal who keepeth thy treasure’s find,
I prithee, tell if I am thy loving pirate,
Who claims thy heart without being irate.

I beseech thee not to shed a tear on my shroud,
Or of my remembrance to make in thy eyes a cloud,
Or to mourn my passing after the passing of days,
Or retrace my hearty strides when I lose my ways.

But I prithee for a worthy second of thine,
To tell who claims thy pearly mine,
Who makes thee frown and smile and fine,
And upon thy aromatic produce will one day wine and dine.

I prithee, from the gallows, free my bleeding heart,
And let what thy felt for me be loud and heard,
By every clown, scribe, priest or nerd.

Let it be witnessed by the birds of the air,
Where keepeth thee my heart, loud and clear,
Thy love for me or stolen stare,
By all, high and low, near and dear.

For the Love of thee and thine for me,
I prithee.

For the love of we and the heavenly scores,
Tis the Custodian of thy heart and sincerely yours.

Special Visit to Bronx Community College By Carmela Perez

On Tuesday April 21st, Bronx Community College had the pleasure to meet NYC’s Democratic Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, a CUNY graduate and proud co-founder of the Gregorio Luperon Preparatory High School. Members of the college attended the meeting as well, including Staci Emanuel, government and community relations manager, Carol White, special assistant to the president for community and public relations, Omar Murray BCC’s SGA vice president, Charles Harding SGA legal and legislative officer, Leona Alfred former SGA secretary, and Muhammad Jalloh, vice-chair of the College Senate.

Rodriguez, a man of honor, intellect and integrity, has dedicated the majority of his life helping out, volunteering and becoming involved with his community. As a strong advocate for the Hispanic community, Rodriguez encouraged students present to become involved and strive for the best.

As the Treasurer of the Student Government Association during his time at City College, Rodriguez emphasizes that, “Whatever we accomplish is not only for us, it’s our honor and the future of our people that have been struggling for centuries to have quality education.” A native of the Dominican Republic, Rodriguez stresses the importance for the Hispanic as well as the black community to keep working hard, because “we are the minority and we were born not with the same opportunity that other people have.” Rodriguez, a man who possesses the ability to fight for what he believes in, began his career at City College, where he majored in political science and took classes during the day, while working full time as a taxi driver during the night to provide for his family.

With the struggle of coming from another country and taking up the challenge of learning a new language, he was able to surpass all opposing barriers and be successful. Throughout his attendance at City College, Rodriguez was an activist who helped organize many student movements. In 1989, he led a march of 25,000 students against tuition increase and budget cuts from John Jay College to the World Trade Center; he also successfully organized a homeless drive against the budget cut from Albany. As an elected Council member, Rodriguez wants to bring forth three projects which he believes will be very helpful: promote diversity in the faculty of CUNY, encourage more community services for the students, and programs for children “ages 0 to 5,” which he claims to be the most important in the list.

The importance of community service and becoming involved with the school is a huge understatement; he could not possibly have stressed enough how much he feels this to be important. He feels that a student should not only get involved with an issue that will be beneficiary for a particular group, but any issue that concerns the student body. It is only by getting together and working together that will result in changes.



GOING GLOBAL...Thank You Letter

April 30, 2010

Salzburg Global Seminar Selection Committee
c/o Barbara Schaier-Peleg
National Center for Educational Alliances, GML A1
Bronx Community College
2155 University Avenue
Bronx, NY 10453

Dear Ms. Schaier-Peleg:

I wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude to the Salzburg Global Seminar Selection Committee for selecting me as one of the Salzburg attendees this year. A few weeks have slipped by since our return from Salzburg but the memories are all still fresh and new. Needless to say, the impact of the Salzburg experience is one that is lasting and has greatly enhanced my perspective as a global citizen.

My first impression as I arrived at the Schloss Leopoldskron was one of tranquility and serenity as I gazed on the beautiful lake, the mountains and the castle. My thoughts quickly shifted to the history embedded in all of that beauty and the “darkness” of WWII that once enshrouded it. How could a time and space so steeped in hatred for mankind be transformed into a “haven” for global citizens? My questions were soon answered when I met the faculty and staff of the Seminar. They have succeeded in creating at the Schloss an atmosphere of oneness – a genuine respect for humankind, regardless of class, color or creed. On this platform, it was easy to relax and enjoy not only their gracious hospitality, the delicious food and fellowship, but the learning experience through the lectures and group projects.

The lectures were not only educational but very thought-provoking and have whetted my appetite to learn more about our world, its peoples, and the issues that we face in this age of globalization. I have also become more conscious of my global neighbors as an American citizen and my responsibility to do whatever I can to make a difference. As the world around me changes, I am learning to adjust my lens – looking at the world, not through “American Eyes,” but through “Global Eyes.”

I am grateful to Bronx Community College for giving me this wonderful opportunity. I also extend special thanks to Professor Andrew Rowan for his unsurpassed and expert leadership as he steered us “across the pond and back.”

With much gratitude,
Eva Joyce
Global Citizen

Point

Counterpoint

My Friday Night...You Be the Judge

By Carmela Perez

Point

The Last Day of Judas Iscariot, directed by Professor John Socas, was a play based on Judas, one of Jesus’ twelve apostles, who betrayed Jesus for a bribe.

The play begins with a young lady who speaks about her child, whom she was unable to bury. The scene changes and the audience is taken to a court room, where Judas’ trial is taking place. Cunningham is Judas’ lawyer who is defending her client against those that are accusing him of betraying Jesus. The opposing lawyer, El Fayoumy, is accusing Judas of being a traitor, who deserves to be in eternal damnation. Throughout the play, the audience gets a background of the story of Judas Iscariot and his role in Jesus’ life. There is a scene in which Judas has a conversation with Jesus, filled with repent, Judas asks Jesus why he was unable to forgive him, when he had forgiven others and had given his life for them as well. He recognizes having made a mistake and angrily demands to know why he could not be forgiven. The play ends with Judas’ trial coming to an end and being found guilty.

Personally, I believe that the acting was good; however, the context of the play was way too explicit and unnecessary. Any Christian spectator would have taken this play to be blasphemous. I don’t mean to come out conceited or arrogant, but the play was way too “ghetto” for my liking. Perhaps they could have lowered the “ghettoness” down a notch. What struck me the most was the use of foul language, curse after curse. It definitely did not make the play any better.

Two of the actors that stood out the most were Langston Belton who portrayed the Devil and Johnathan Aviles who interpreted the lawyer. Amongst them were other good actors who played their part well. One of the scenes, which I thought was kind of crappy, though, was that of the angel, who was portrayed by a young woman. I don’t know what made her part the worse, the cursing, the “ghettoness,” or maybe just the combination of both that made me squirm in my seat with annoyance.

One of the best scenes, however, was that of the Devil with Judas who was acted by Keisean Dasser. Regardless of the curses, which by now I was immune to, the scene was an excellent one. These actors did a really good job in expressing emotion and connecting with the audience. Ultimately, the play was not a complete waste of my time, and the acting blew me away.

I did not go with the mentality to see good acting, but I truly underestimated their acting abilities. Here’s a tip for their next play: Just because we live in a ghetto environment, does not mean that we have to portray our school like that as well. The use of explicit language is inappropriate (and unnecessary) for this type of play, or any other play for that matter.

BCC Theatre Workshop Presents

The Last Days of Judas Iscariot

By Mary Healey

Counterpoint

Should Judas Iscariot be in Hell? This question—one that doesn’t usually come up in normal conversation—is addressed in the spring production of the BCC Theatre Workshop, Stephen Adly Guirgis’ play, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*.

The scene is a courtroom. The place is Purgatory. Judas Iscariot (Keisean Vasser) sits catatonically in a wheelchair. Gloria (Gabriel Jackson) and the Bailiff (Sharif Ali) skillfully set the stage. The Judge (Andisha Steele) must decide whose cases will be heard. However, since she has been in her job for 140 years, she’s ill-inclined to hear anyone. Ms. Steele ably expresses her boredom, lack of interest and quiet desperation. Only some deft lawyering by Cunningham (Ashley Perez), Judas’ defense counsel and the intervention of St. Monica (Idalia Castillo) get the case on the docket.

Cunningham and the prosecutor El Fayoumy (Johnathan Aviles) clearly have issues. Ms. Perez shows passion bordering on obsession for her client whom she considers to have been wronged by history. Mr. Aviles shows the smugness of an advocate whose case is in the bag.

The witnesses show many different aspects of the case. Mother Teresa (Suzette Salmon) is a slightly disoriented deaf person who is uncomfortable passing judgment on another. But she can’t help thinking that Judas shouldn’t be in heaven, because he has abandoned God’s mercy. Pontius Pilate (Ibrahim Siddiq) true to his biblical roots puts all the blame elsewhere. Mr. Siddiq is most effective in portraying the discomfort of Pilate as an official of Rome stationed in the backwaters of Judea.

Caiphas the Elder (Steven Pena) brings to the fore the issue of the age-long vilification of the Jewish leaders in the death of Jesus. St. Peter (Anthony S. Borgia) and St. Thomas (William Crespo) appear on film in taped depositions. Mr. Borgia delivers a hard-boiled fisherman who conveys the rough and tumble politics of the time. Mr. Crespo deftly describes the relationships of the apostles and gives us a window on St. Peter. (“Just don’t talk to him about fish.”)

Satan (Langston Belton) appears several times in the courtroom. Mr. Belton plays him as a corporate type with an enterprise to run, but he does become wistful when Cunningham grills him on his fall from grace. It takes a truly skilled actor to portray a vulnerability in Satan.

Judas sits stoically at the defense table during all of this testimony. He is amazingly motionless throughout. Then, in a kind of flashback, we see him in a bar talking with Satan. Judas effectively shows his humanity, regret, and fear of damnation along with a bravado that thirty pieces of silver in one’s pocket brings. Satan, once again shows his command of the situation.

Many of the play’s more affecting scenes take place outside of the courtroom. Director John Socas makes full use of the Playhouse’s space by introducing the most dramatic characters from the side aisles. The play opens with a moving soliloquy of Henrieta Iscariot (Shadyea-seine Adams) describing the pain of burying a son in a potter’s field. Ms. Adams delivers this compelling speech on the verge of tears and brings the audience along with her.

St. Monica’s opening speech, delivered from the side of the stage, is a tour de force by Ms. Castillo. In a speech peppered with profanity which rises to the level of poetry, St. Monica describes her slowly-growing sympathy for Judas and her tactics for nagging God into giving him a trial. St. Monica returns later with Mary Magdalene (Tiffany Allen) who gives a moving account of Jesus’ early days.

Jesus (Ivan Rodriguez) appears in the aisle towards the end of the play trying to get through to Judas who remains unmoved. Mr. Rodriguez and Mr. Vasser deliver a most convincing scene.

In the last scene of the play Mr. Aviles sheds his professional demeanor and confesses to Judas how a single transgression has changed his entire life. It is a heartfelt and moving speech delivered with precise and perfect timing. It brings the play full circle as the lights go out.

The Last Days of Judas Iscariot is a demanding play that combines drama, comedy, history, satire and philosophy. The BCC Theatre Workshop has risen to the challenge and produced a memorable experience for everyone in the audience. Congratulations to all.

The Last Days of Judas Iscariot was directed by John Socas; Assistant Director: Samantha Day; Stage Manager: Langston Belton; Crew: William Crespo; Script Editing/Dramaturgy: Laurence Brenner; Poster Design: Shawn Alexandre; Technical Assistance: Rex Butt; Film Crew and Editing: Phillip Thompson, Shawn Alexandre, Fernando Gil.

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Summer Reading List – Going Global



Keep up your reading and critical thinking skills over the long summer break. Here are some suggestions from the BCC faculty.

Knots (2007) by Nuruddin Farah

Set in Mogdishou, the war-torn capital city of lawless Somalia, the novel is about courage and hope of common people who seem to enjoy life against all odds.

Women of Sand and Myrrh (1992) by Hanan Al-Shaykh

These are four intertwined narratives from women in a wealthy Arab desert country. All of the characters live in luxury and privilege but are denied the very basic freedom of self-expression.

So Long a Letter (1989) by Miriama Ba

This long letter is written by a widow, Ramatoulaye, to her friend, over the mandatory forty-day mourning period following the death of a husband. Both women married for love and had happy, productive marriages; both were educated and had work they loved. During their lives, both of these women's husbands chose to take a second wife - and each woman then made a different choice.

Waiting (2000) by Ha Jin

Lin Kong is a Chinese army doctor trapped in an arranged marriage that embarrasses and repels him. (Shuyu has country ways, a withered face, and most humiliating of all, bound feet.) Nevertheless, he's content with his tidy military life, at least until he falls in love with Manna, a nurse at his hospital. Regulations forbid an army officer to divorce without his wife's consent--until 18 years have passed, that is, after which he is free to marry again. So, year after year Lin asks his wife for his freedom, and year after year he returns from the provincial courthouse: still married, still unable to consummate his relationship with Manna.

God's Bits of Wood (1996) by Sembene Ousmane

This story enters on a railroad strike by Negro workers in and around Dakar. The plot revolves around the battle that ensues along racial lines and the long-lasting effects on all those involved once the strike ends.

Native Speaker (1996) by Chang Rae Lee

This book recounts a young Korean-American's struggle to conjoin the fragments of his personality in culturally diverse New York City.

Refuge Denied: The St. Louis Passengers and the Holocaust (2006)

The St. Louis—carrying German-Jewish refugees and refused permission to dock in Cuba and Florida in 1939—became a potent symbol of global indifference to the fate of European Jewry on the eve of the Holocaust.

Stolen Lives (2001) by Malika Oufkir

Oufkir tells of the 20-year imprisonment of her upper-class Moroccan family following a 1972 coup attempt against King Hassan II by her father, a close military aide.

Queen Victoria (1921) by Lytton Strachey

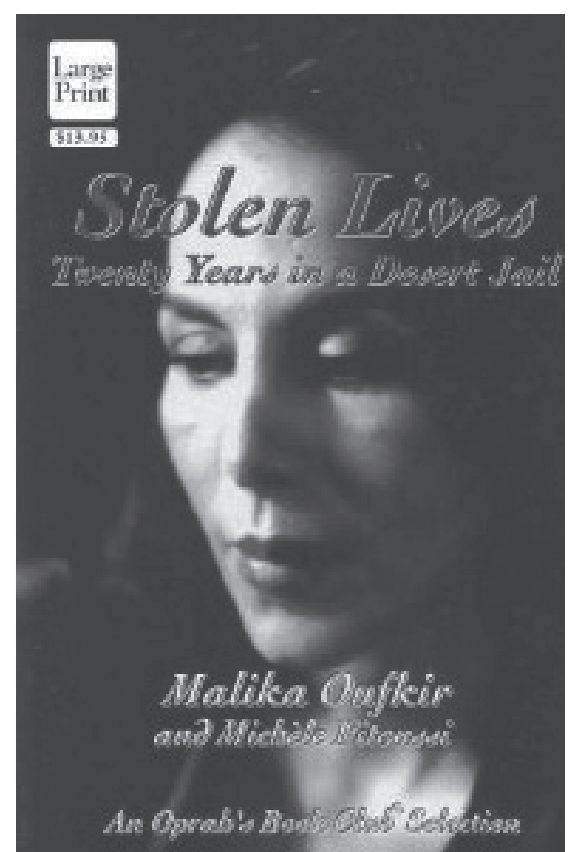
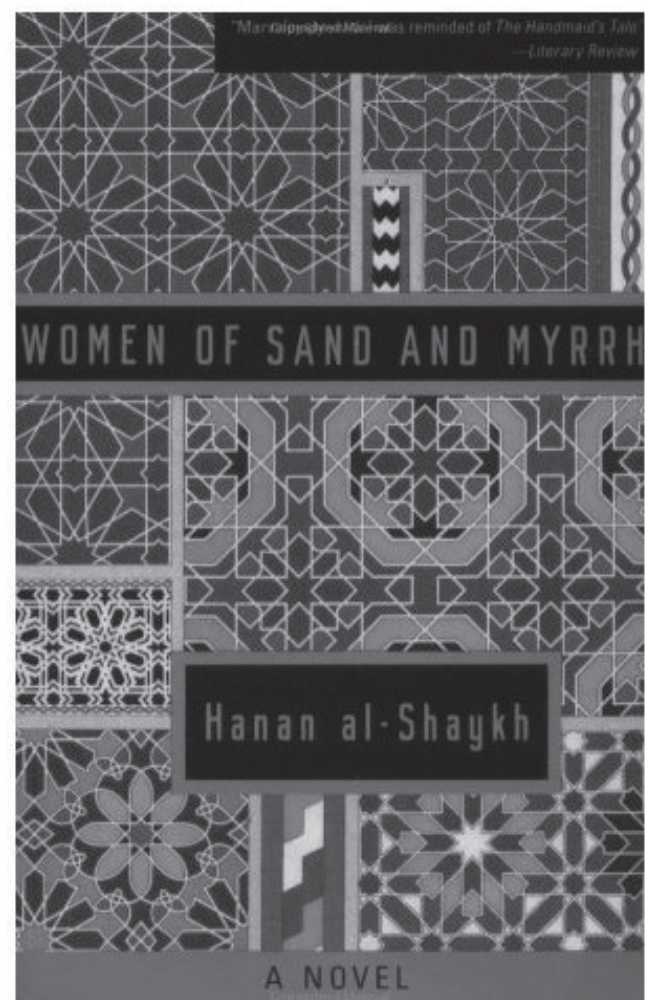
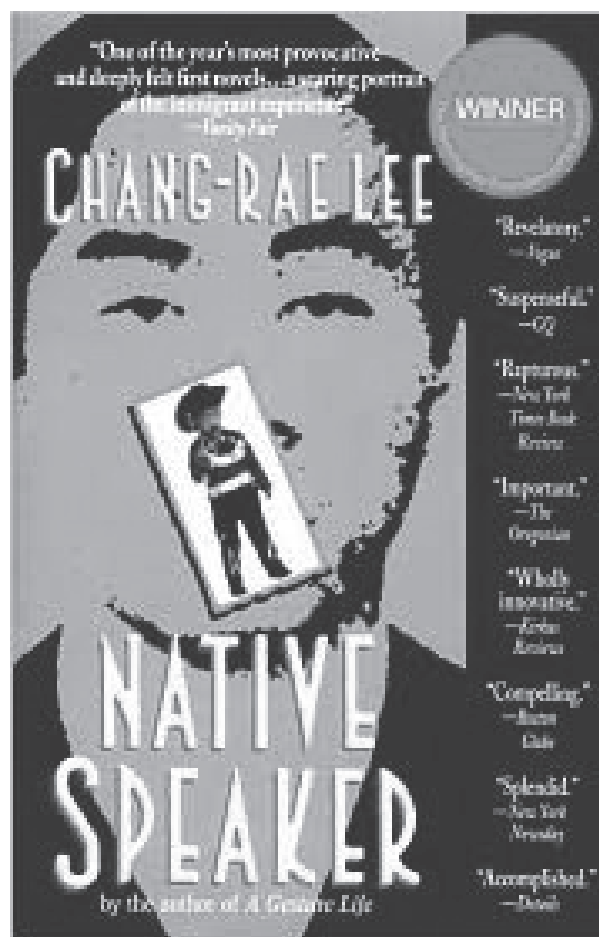
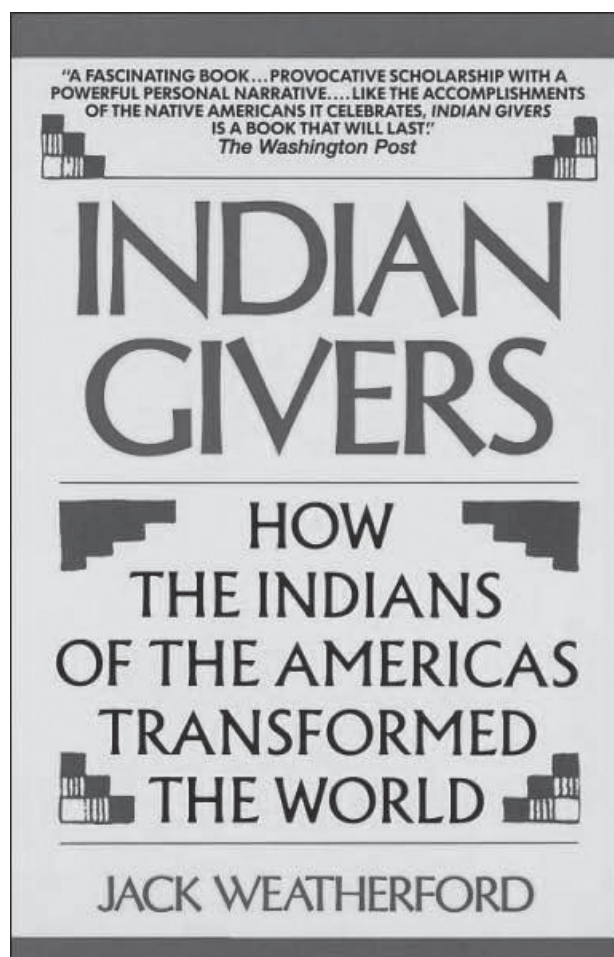
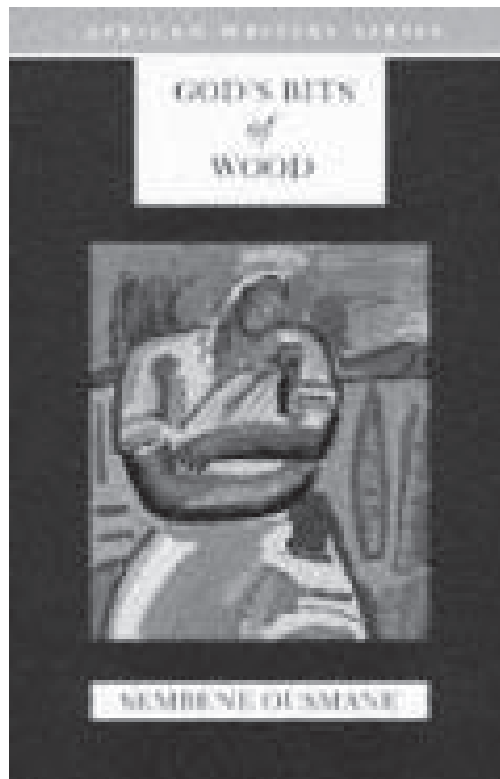
Strachey's classic biography offers a fascinating portrait of the long-reigning Queen of England and Empress of the British Empire whose reign spanned the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th.

Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World (1989) by Jack Weatherford

The author traces how the cultural, social, and political practices of the Indians of the Americas transformed the way life is lived throughout the world.

The Custom of the Country (1913) by Edith Wharton

Flowing between the stifling social seasons of New York and Paris society, *The Custom of the Country* is Wharton's powerful dark satire of the beautiful, amoral Undine Spragg. Since her gender and class deny her an independent existence, she uses marriage with cunning and chilling skill to achieve the life she thinks she deserves.



Writer of the Month

Juvenile Gang Violence: Genetic Predisposition vs. Environmental Influences

By John Ortiz

The argument is whether or not the cause of juvenile gang violence derives as a result of genetic predisposition or if it is a by-product of environmental influences. Scores of scientists, scholars, psychologists and other behavioral experts line up on either side of the issue. A case can be made and supported for both views. I believe the scale tips in favor of environmental influences. All humans have the capacity for violence; the majority of us have it under control. When confronted with a volatile situation we tend to reason it out, we look for a non-violent solution to our disputes. We think of violence as the last resort and not the first option. We, as a species, tend to be “learners” we are not born knowing everything. If anything, the opposite is probably true. Violence is a learned behavior; there are myriad influences for this type of behavior. In the following passages, I intend to discuss five that are consistent contributors: economic factors, permissive families, unstable neighborhoods, delinquent peer groups and the mass media.

Most juveniles learn how be violent through environmental influences. History tells us that violent behavior and crime has many faces, which usually depend upon who are occupying the bottom rung of the economic ladder. Ethnic groups such as the Irish, Italians and Jews at one time resided in pockets of depressed neighborhoods. Each group displayed a tremendous capacity for violence and criminal behavior. Turf wars over drugs, gambling, prostitution, and other criminal enterprises were common in those communities. Today’s depressed neighborhoods are infested by drugs, guns, and a sense of hopelessness. What we are faced with is a dangerous situation. Inner city role models in these deprived neighborhoods are drugs dealers, pimps and gang bangers. They’re the ones driving expensive cars, living in luxury apartments, and possessing huge (tax-free) bankrolls. That’s a powerful image to an impressionable teenager living in poverty, his only alternative is to stay in school, work hard, and maybe, if he’s lucky, he can avoid the pitfalls associated with the ghetto. According to Delbert S. Elliot, author of “Environmental Factors Contribute to Juvenile Crime and Violence,” “ineffective parenting, violent schools, high drop out rates, high adolescent pregnancies rates, substance abuse and high unemployment rates are all concentrated in such neighborhoods” (3).

Adolescents of today are dealing with issues that are unique to their generation. They live in the super information age. For instance, the Internet has opened doors to topics of violence and abuse that parents used to keep closed. As a result, parenting involves a great deal more than it once did. When children witness violence at home directly from their parents or through the media, it becomes further confirmation that violence is a way to solve problems. As Delbert S. Elliot emphasized, “Early exposure to violence in the family ... involve[s] witnessing either violence or physical abuse. Research suggests that these forms of exposure to violence during childhood increase the risk of violent behavior during adolescence by as much as 40%” (2). Teenagers, as a rule, are not sophisticated enough to process the images and data that are received on a daily basis. As a result, the adolescent ends up with very little structure, and occasional discipline in his life. Too often, teenagers are forced to grow up on their own. Another unfortunate situation that manifests itself is that emptiness is created. This emptiness exists because of a lack of guidance, structure, and discipline, which happen to be the main building blocks of maturity and adulthood. The emptiness is being filled too often by neighborhood gangs. Additionally, joining gangs gives juveniles a sense of camaraderie, a sense of family, a sense of security and a sense of being part of something greater than themselves. Gang members see themselves as brothers and sisters completely dedicated to one another.

In addition, the media also plays a prominent role in creating indelible images that make gang life attractive. Many of today’s “violent music lyrics,” glorify violence, they disrespect women, and they also promote the illusion that illicit money making schemes, like selling drugs, pimping and extortion are perfectly normal options for earning a living. As an article by Frank Palumbo revealed, “Violent Music Lyrics Can Harm Children.”

“According to a U.S. Department of Education report, a large percentage of young women and girls have been subjected to a pattern of overt sexual hostility accompanied by actual or threatened physical contact and the repeated use of obscene or foul language” (1). Television, video games, and movies engage in such over-the-top violence that many youth become desensitized to murder, mayhem, blood, and gore. An article by Scott Barbour titled “Media Violence Causes Teen Violence” acknowledged that there is “a clear cause-and-effect relationship between television violence and violent behavior. This connection has been confirmed by government officials and institutions, including the surgeon general in 1972 and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in 1982” (2). Moreover, the same article further highlighted, “The NIMH stated the issue plainly: ‘Violent programs on television lead to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers who watch those programs’” (Barbour 1). The not-so-subliminal method is, if one needs money, use violence, if one has a dispute, use deadly violence, and on and on it goes. Furthermore, an article by Charles S. Clark titled “T.V Violence” pointed out that, “The child who has been watching programs with primarily aggressive content comes away with the impression that the world is a jungle fraught with dangerous threats, and the only way to survive is to be on the attack” (2).

I believe that we are already seeing the effects of juvenile gang violence all across the nation. For instance, the tragic and senseless massacre that happened at “Columbine” is a perfect example. As author Paul Klite pointed out in his article “The Government Should Restrict News Coverage of Violent Crime,” “Many fingerprints are on the proverbial trigger—inadequate parenting; the availability of guns; alienation of youth; mental illness, school security, manipulative violence in film, video games, television, the internet and pop music” (1). The mere fact that children have to pass through metal detectors on their way to class is a clear indicator that juvenile violence has become a major concern. As Delbert S. Elliot illustrated, “Between 1985 and 1983 the firearm-related homicide rate for adolescents has increased over 150% and firearms now account for nearly three-fourths of all homicides of young black men. Surveys estimate that 270,000 guns are taken to school each day” (4).

Some researchers firmly believe that the predisposition argument is more convincing. Most of the studies and test have been in the area of I.Q. To paraphrase an excerpt from an article by Dr. Anthony Walsh titled “Genetic and Environmental Explanations of Juvenile Violence in Advantaged and Disadvantaged Environments” bio-researchers do not ignore the ramifications of the environment, nor do they assert the presence of “crime genes” (188). “The biosocial perspective fully recognizes the mutually influencing and interactive effect of the biological and the social in producing human behavior” (Walsh 188). Likewise, Dr. Walsh’s article further explained that biosocial researchers Rose and Osgood “found that the genetic component was approximately three times more important than the common environmental, and about four times more important than the specific environmental component in accounting for variance in delinquent peer association and delinquency itself” (Walsh 188). In addition, an article written by David Wasserman titled “Is There Value in Identifying Individual Genetic Predisposition to Violence” further acknowledged that, “In 1993, researchers did find a marker, then a gene, associated with violence and aggression, in the male members of a Dutch family. This was an unexpected and somewhat awkward finding: it looked like the kind of “major” crime gene that researchers had not been expecting to discover” (26). Furthermore, Wasserman’s article continued to say that, “while the family studied was atypical in several relevant respects, the study had enormous impact, in part because the affected genes was know [sic] to produce a protein, monoamine oxidase A (MAOA). MAOA is involved in the metabolism of serotonin, a neurotransmitter thought to play a role in ... mediating genes and behavior” (26). In contrast, most of the evidence previously mentioned in this essay clearly demonstrates that there is an ample

volume of data pointing in the direction of environmental influences in comparison to those of the genetic predisposition argument. For example, the same article by David Wasserman, paradoxically expressed that, “some critics argue from an evolutionary perspective that while all human beings, or all human males, may well have genetic propensities for violent behavior, individual differences in the strength of those propensities are unlikely to have a genetic source” (25).

In the final analysis, the argument, (nature vs. nurture) is still raging. There is supportive data for both sides of the issue. However, the majority of evidence points towards environmental influences, despite the fact that some researchers assert that the genetic predisposition argument has more validity. More importantly, additional studies need to be conducted in order to establish conclusively that genetics to some degree are responsible for juvenile violence. Science and technology are opening new windows of information into the world of genetics. While this may be true, it is still too early to rely on current findings. We are taught to behave according to values and beliefs handed down through parenting, religion and social, societal mores and decorum. It can be easily argued that our entire lives, from the cradle to the grave, are a learning experience. We are taught how to eat, act, crawl, and walk before we utter our first words in life. Furthermore, I believe we are in a transitional phase, we as a society, need to start looking at new ways of preventing juvenile exposure to violence. It is evident that we have played a significant role in this deteriorating drama. There are principles we should all stand for as a society. Unfortunately, its one of the things we haven’t quite learned yet. There will be a time when genetics, combined with environmental regulations, play a role in curbing violence, but we as a nation are not there yet. Scientific developments could offer some promising changes in the future, but we still have a long way to go, in the interim, we are a species of “learners” and we always will be.

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